

Puppies for Sale

Beverly Siegel

Puppies for Sale" is a sign that always catches my eye, for I am one of the dog-lovers of whom people who do not like dogs disdainfully speak. Ever since I was a toddler I have had a dog — a chow that I clung to when I was learning to walk; a fox terrier that stood watch while I romped about in my play-pen; a bulldog that met me after school; a cocker that slept at the foot of my bed and warmed my toes during the winter; and lastly a little dachshund that my family tried in vain to keep alive. All of these pets are only memories to me now, but I shall never forget any of them. In every case, however, the silly little things the dogs did are linked in my memory with the tragic ends they met.

My sister and I were both very small when we got Salt and Pepper. An uncle gave them to us for our birthdays, and immediately we fell in love with these two fox terriers. Salty was white with a tan eye and a tan tail. She was mine. Pepper was also white but with black markings. For three years we were devoted to the dogs. We playfully pulled them around by their long curly tails. In the summer when they panted from the heat, we teasingly caught hold of their tongues. We cuddled them almost constantly, and we were wonderfully happy.

One summer evening Salty began to act strangely. She was listless and sulky. Her nose was warm and very dry. We took her to the veterinarian, who said that distemper had struck. For several weeks during her illness Salty was treated like a princess. She was denied nothing that might help her get well. Mother stayed up at night and rocked her in her arms. We did not leave her alone for a single moment. Still as the long weeks passed, she did not improve.

As the critical stage of distemper manifested itself, Salty became blind and eventually senseless. It was heart-rending to have to watch as she unconsciously ran into doors and cupboards, dashing madly about from place to place in an effort to find shelter and comfort for even a short minute. None of us could stand to see the dog in such a pitiful condition any longer. We took her back to the pet hospital and had her put to sleep. For weeks I felt empty inside.

Not long after that we got Punch. He was a toy Boston terrier who got his name, as you may have guessed, from his punched-in nose. Punch was a perfect dog. His markings were exactly as they should be for show, but we wanted him

only for a pet. Like Salty, he was terribly spoiled. Mother tried without success to keep him off the furniture, particularly the beds. Every night when he thought we were all asleep, Punch tucked his toenails under his paws and sneaked along the wall to our bedroom. Sometimes he got caught, and Mother would softly call out, "Punch!" The soft footsteps would stop momentarily, but soon the dog could faintly be heard creeping the hall, and presently one noisy spring would land him on the bed. Once there, he crawled under the blankets to the foot of the bed and contentedly remained there until morning.

Punch had a genuine dislike for traveling, and it seemed as though he hated Chicago more than any other place. By some uncanny instinct he knew when we were going to Chicago and hid for hours before we were to leave. We even had to stop mentioning the name of that city in his presence, because if we did, he would immediately disappear under some convenient chair or sofa.

Punch wandered away one day, but none of us worried about him at first. He was in the habit of going off for a day, but he always returned at night. This time he did not come back. For weeks we searched for him by tracking down the bits of information received from friends, by advertising in the newspaper, and by telephoning many people. When all hope was gone, we decided that Punch had been stolen. He loved us too much simply to run away.

Buttons was our next dog. My sister and I went to a place where cocker puppies were sold, and he caught our eyes and tugged at our hearts instantly. We went to get him the next day.

As she had done with our other dogs, Mother complained about the work Buttons caused her. She had to feed him. She took care of him when he did not feel well. She picked up the big clumps of hair that he was always shedding. But it was also she who tearfully carried him home when a car hit and killed him instantly.

Our last dog was a dachshund. We got Melvin when he was only six weeks old. Day by day the little ball of fur and teeth became more a part of the family. But, unknown to us, day by day he was developing pneumonia. By the time his illness was noticeable, the tiny pup was very weak. Every day for the remaining ten days of his young life he received penicillin shots. His pills were numerous enough to fill four bottles. He never left our arms the whole time he was sick. Just when we had really begun to love Melvin, he died. He

was too tiny to overcome the weakness that the pneumonia had left with him.

As I relate these incidents, a picture of each little dog appears before my eyes, and I recall the love and kindness with which each dog was treated. I have never been able to understand the inhumanity with which people treat their so-called pets. To me, pets are almost as necessary in a home as furniture. My family has no dog now, but we are going to get another one as soon as the weather gets warm again.